

Western MRS Meeting
July 27, 2005
Haywood County

Counties Present: Buncombe, Caldwell, Catawba, Cherokee, Cleveland, Jackson, Iredell, Macon, Transylvania, Yancey

State Staff: Tony Troop, Cindy Holman, Sybil Wheeler, Holly McNeill, Susan Sanderson, Heather Thomas, Mark Morgan

Agenda

Staff Changes

Legislation

Evaluation

Training

PIP CFSR

IVE Review

Division Letters

Learning Institute

Next Meetings 8/31 Asheville, Enka Campus A/B Tech room 128

Discussion Two Policy Issues

Staff Changes

- A lot of these at the Division.
- Adolph Simmons (data management) and Todd Hayes (review) left for other positions.
- Renee Hannah moved to South Carolina.
- Carl Brazile (work first), Amelia Lance (adoption), Sherry Dillard (Careline), and Sabrina Southern (review) went to NC Fast.
- Several vacancies now at the Division.

Legislation

- Changes to 7B, effective 10/1, signed by the Governor in May.
- Can read on web HB277, click on the last one for the final version it mostly just changes the language.
- Big change if the incident occurs at a day care, workers no longer have to visit the child's home.
- 8 positions will be available for Foster Care Licensing.
- 2 million will be appropriated for CPS staff however the Division does not know how this will be distributed.
 - It is very likely that the distribution of this funding will be linked to the staffing survey, so when this is sent out be sure to complete it accurately and timely.
 - Will also probably look at the 90 day no service list. (If workers have a large caseload, make sure they are closing cases appropriately.)
 - Will be offering a statewide training on the completion of daysheets.

Evaluation

- Heather said programmers are working on Phase 2 of the web based system. Largest user difference is that it will distinguish between 210 and 215 and enable entry for children on the same form number at the same time. Not sure when this will roll out because of the pending changes to the 5104.
- Heather will be starting an evaluation/data list serve. All people that attended training on the web system will be signed up. If anyone else would like to be signed up, please let her know via email.
- Tony is also starting an MRS email: nc.mrs@ncmail.net
- Duke currently working on evaluation making site visits to counties now (not visiting any Western counties, but if they call wanting information, please be cooperative).
- Tony will be sending out some data warehouse info as of 6/30. Includes the number of cases of neglect of dependency that were done as family assessment.
 - Need to realize what these numbers mean and what they do not. They may provide clues to look closer at something, but they only reflect what was entered into the Central Registry at the time Tony ran the report, and also consider that there are some types of neglect and dependency that cannot be taken as family assessment. Finally, counties were still implementing this year and this data is for the whole fiscal year.

Training

- 52 current MRS counties no longer the priority.
- If you have any questions about training or problems registering, please call Teresa Turner.
- Will try to train the 48 in policy in fall and winter to have 100% trained by January 2, 2006.

PIP/Child & Family Services Review

- Final notice that NC is out of program improvement status.
- Will be reviewed again in April June timeframe. They will be concentrating on: Foster Care (older children), Services to Youth (teens, special needs), Relationships to federally recognized tribes. The reviewers will also interview court judges.
- Last time the benchmarks were 90%, this time they are 95%.

IV-E Review

- We passed. Were allowed to be in error on 4 cases, we had 3 with errors.
- Eckerd Camps originally the feds said these were not Foster Care settings so they were not IV-E eligible. North Carolina successfully showed that the camps do meet the definition of foster care so we are allowed to use IV-E.

Division Letters

- There are a lot of Dear County Director Letters please check the web for those.

Learning Institute

- Comment that it filled up. Tony replied that because of the way it was funded participation had to be limited. The speakers were paid for by training money but that could not cover meals and lodging and that had to come out of another pot of money which will not be available again.
- In planning for 2006 Institute decided not to have it in June at the end of a fiscal year so that counties would have funds to send folks.
- Will begin planning soon let Tony know if you are interested.

Miscellaneous other issues/questions/discussion

- After the MRS policy is changed, the process of changing Chapter 8 will begin. Start thinking of things to include. Also changing Administrative Code.
- NC is becoming known for MRS. Recently the Division hosted visitors from Canada who had searched internationally and decided to model their system after MRS in NC.
- Remember that suspected Meth Labs must be taken as investigative assessments.
- Cross County investigations If your buddy county is non-MRS and they do a conflict of interest investigation, your county keys the 5104. Current policy says reciprocal assessments must be investigative, but the new policy will give the option of family assessment since all counties will be MRS.

Policy Discussion

There are two issues that need to be discussed. Tony will get feedback from all 3 meetings this month and then draft a response to JoAnn based on county input.

Issue #1 Current MRS policy states that with 215 Intensive or High Risk there must be weekly contacts but twice a month must meet with all family members, (MRS manual pg. 30 or 31 2nd bullet) however general CPS policy states that for Intensive or High Risk families there must be visits with the victim children and their caretakers. We need to clarify are we saying that twice a month contact had to be with all family members for family assessment cases, even if some of those family members are not considered to have safety issues?

- Do we want the new MRS policy twice a month with all family members, or just victim children and their caretakers? Other two meetings have had consensus to match criteria to regular CPS policy.
- Issues with 2 households where mom is high risk and dad is not. Is inconvenient to force dad to attend all meetings.
- Is it family friendly not to see the whole family?
- Is it family friendly to make children who are not the issue be at all these meetings?

- Need information from siblings, and don't want to end up with a forgotten child.
- Part of this depends on if counties take an all or nothing approach to substantiation.
- Suggestion was once a month for non victim children.

Issue #2 Concern regarding child on child sexual contact. Currently if the parents are providing adequate supervision this is screened out, and if it is not, it is taken as a neglect case, making it eligible for family assessment. Several advocacy groups believe that these cases should be required to be investigative cases, and counties should not be allowed the latitude to decide how best to handle them. (This concern also extends to suspicious injuries.)

- The advocacy groups think this is not safe because:
 - May be assigning what is a sexual abuse case to a worker with no sexual abuse training.
 - Although not always the case, frequently the child perp is a victim themselves and if you interview the family together you may be interviewing the child perp in front of the parent who sexually abused them.
 - Evidence gathering process is tainted by interviewing family together.
- CPS can do their job well, but cannot serve all needs of children. Law Enforcement etc. has a role to play as well, and don't ask CPS to do that. If we give in to each special interest group we should just stop MRS now. We believe that MRS works, and social workers have the professional judgment to accurately assess cases.
- The group consensus was to leave the policy as is and let counties use professional judgment